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Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Executive Office of Education

Charter School Application Designated Contact Person

Please provide the Executive Office of Education with the following information identifying a designated contact person for the group submitting an application for charter school status. This form *must* be filed along with the charter school application no later than February 15, 1994. Please mail all required materials to:

Secretary of Education
ATTN: Charter Schools
Executive Office of Education
One Ashburton Place, Room 1401
Boston, Massachusetts 02108

Tel: (617) 727-1313

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

FEB 12 1994

University of Massachusetts

Please print or type:

JH Montague & Associates

Name of organization/group filing for charter school status

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Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Executive Office of Education

Charter School Application

I/We, the undersigned charter school applicant(s), do hereby certify that the information provided herein and filed with the Executive Office of Education on this the 15th day of February (month) of the year 1994, is to the best of my/our knowledge, truthful and accurate. C

(This signature sheet must be attached to the application when it is filed.)

Name: SIGRID BERENSTEIN Signature: Sigrid Berenstein Date: Feb 15/94
Address: 18 LOVENELL RD City: WELLESLEY State: MA Zip: 02181
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Name: Catherine O'Brien Signature: Catherine M O'Brien Date: 2-15-94
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Name: Juliette H. Montague Signature: Juliette H. Montague Date: 2.15.94
Address: 6 Fells Rd City: Wellesley State: MA Zip: 02181
Tel: 617-237-9616

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____
Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
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Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Tel: _____

If more space is required, please attach additional sheets.

Executive Office of Education, One Ashburton Place, Room 1401, Boston, MA, 02108

The Charter School for Reinventing Education

Table of Contents

1.	Mission Statement	1
2.	School Objectives	2
3.	Statement of Need	3
4.	School Demographics	5
5.	Recruiting and Marketing Plan	6
6.	Admissions Policy	7
7.	Profile of the Founding Coalition	8
8.	Timetable	9

Charter School Application

1. *Mission Statement:*

The purpose of education is empowerment. In a heterogeneous classroom a school must strive to make the experience a challenge for each child. It is difficult to develop a pedagogy for each child where there is more than twenty children in a class, where there is a huge spread in the children's capacity for learning, where the motivation for learning is high in some and low in others, where their day is fragmented into very short blocks of time, where those with special needs have been assimilated into the large classroom, and where the curriculum has been carved in stone. The effort to individualize has been attempted, but with the cutbacks necessitated by the current economic conditions, the opportunities for those who are ready for more challenging work are being cut out of the public school's programs. Full inclusion has been a welcome change for the academically challenged, but the needs of the children at the other end of the spectrum have been neglected.

The children whose needs are not being served in Wellesley and surrounding towns today are those who are extremely motivated to learn, who are eager to take the initiative in the planning of and doing their work, and who are ready for more challenging work in one or more areas. Some of the students are capable of reaching far beyond the curriculum for their respective grade level in certain areas such as reading, others may have an intuitive understanding of arithmetic operations and are ready to explore areas of mathematics beyond basic arithmetic. In the present system these children have to suffer through the same worksheets and assignments as the child who is struggling to decode the written word and to solve the most basic math problem. By the time these children, who were highly motivated to begin with, have reached the grade level where they can choose advanced courses, they will have sat through thousands and thousands of hours of monotonous, repetitive drills and tasks that will have only served to dull their mind and persuade them that their energies are better spent in nonacademic endeavors.

The purpose of the Montague School is to provide an alternative environment for children in grades K-8 who are

ready, willing, and able to pursue their work with initiative, responsibility and excitement. The environment will be designed so that the students will be encouraged to move ahead in those areas of interest to them. Resource centers within the classrooms will be established to facilitate independent work. Teachers will be given freedom to try out new methods of instruction, and design their own curricula to meet the needs of their students.

2. School Objectives:

A. The school's broad academic objectives for each child are as follows: reading for enjoyment at increasingly advanced levels; thinking comprehensively and critically about issues; fluent oral and written expression of original thought as well as of the ideas of others; development of insight into the relationship between the various facts, events, forces, ideas, etc. at both a macroscopic, as well as a microscopic level; problem-solving, on both an individual and group basis; facility with the language of mathematics, including algebra and geometry; and familiarity with the diversity of animal and plant life that our planet offers.

Independent reading and writing will be at the core of the daily program. Reading will be key to the study of the language arts, as well as other areas of an individual's interest. Spelling, grammar, sentence structure, etc. will be studied in the context of the books that the children are reading.

Math and science will be taught together through hands-on demonstrations and experiments whenever possible. Those areas of science that are abundant with opportunity for discovery will be presented in such a way that each child will be engaged in forming her own hypotheses and testing them out whenever possible.

Students will move through their studies at their own pace. Individualized interaction with the children will be the primary means by which teachers guide the students as well as assess their progress. The children will also evaluate her own progress, and their families will provide feedback regarding their observations of their child and his development.

The philosophy of the school is that education of our children requires a partnership between the child, the school and her parents. Parents will be expected to participate in the education of their child in different ways at different times. They may be asked to transport their child to a library for research, a museum for certain exhibits, or to work with their child at home in areas where the child needs additional support.

B. Nonacademic goals for students include understanding and appreciation of themselves, both as individuals, as well as members of a global community; an awareness of how their own beliefs and expectations play a role in their development; and appreciation of the endless possibilities that await them as they reach out and explore their universe. Broadly framed the Montague School's objectives are summed up as follows: to instill in each child a sense of self-worth, to empower each child to acquire the tools she will need to face any challenge she encounters, and to foster each child's unique capacities to excel.

C. First and foremost the environment will be user-friendly, with the design of the classrooms, library, and arts and music rooms reflecting the fact that the school is there to serve the students. There is great latitude extended to the teachers to arrange their areas to best suit their students' needs. Places and times for independent reading and writing at all levels in all subjects according to the student's choice would be built in to each and every school day.

3. *Statement of Need::*

A. Children are "bored to death". They shrink from education as though it was a highly toxic substance! In fact, public schools have consistently failed to educate our youth. There may be many causes of the crisis that exists today, and many symptoms of its toll on the young people. But, the fact of the matter is, that something is dreadfully wrong with the education being offered our children today. Children are tuning out and dropping out even while they continue to physically attend school. They have written off any hope that the school may be important in their lives. Teaching is reduced to containing the students and testing them, as though they were some kind of experimental laboratory animal population. These children did not enter the school in this frame of mind, but rather as innocent and highly

impressionable young minds, ready to learn, but vulnerable to the rigid dictates of the mass produced educational system. They begin their education hungry for knowledge. But they are not allowed to investigate and explore freely anymore. They are spoon-fed homogenized baby food for years even though they are capable of eating a variety of real food. Eventually, they lose their appetite. Then they have to be force fed. In the pursuit of imparting knowledge to children teachers have increasingly dissected and distilled the material they present, until it has lost all meaning.

From the perspective of the student, school is not a rewarding experience. He is told what to do every minute of the day. He suffers from anxiety related to the fear of disapproval if he wanders beyond the arbitrary boundaries. Avoidance strategies are developed gradually, eventually resulting in a child's mind set being completely closed to learning anything that is not required.

From the perspective of the family of the student, it is very distressing. In the current classroom there is no place for the parent to participate meaningfully in her child's work on an on-going basis. Everything that will happen in the classroom has been predetermined by the teacher and the way the curriculum has been set up. A great deal of tension develops around any attempts on the part of the parent to make suggestions about the child's work.

From the perspective of society, a potentially great resource, the creative abilities and the boundless energies of its youth, are squandered. Those who may have been able to make significant contributions to society have dropped out. Others struggle with the self-image garnered in the early years of school. Character traits that society values such as initiative, responsibility, and creativity are gradually suppressed in the child in order to get her to conform to certain prescriptions of what it means to be a good student.

The need for change is seen and felt everywhere. The system as it exists is outdated and unworkable. The children are exposed to all kinds of stimuli everywhere they turn, and they are limited in their ability to make use of the classroom, as it is set up today, to help them make sense of the world. If as a

society we are going to excel, we must provide opportunities for our children to excel. We must develop a pedagogy that is flexible enough to allow for different learning styles and rates including fast learners. This pedagogy ought to conform to the way children like to learn, by following their own guiding light into areas of the unknown, rather than having the light only filtered down on those particular facts or tasks or skills that have been set down in stone as appropriate for children of their respective physical ages.

3.B. Free of bureaucratic guidelines a charter school could breathe new life into the education of children who are ready, willing and able to stretch their minds and reach out for learning experiences that are open-ended, that are custom-tailored to the child's own specifications, that are as much as possible, self-determined. The human brain is an incredible organ which is not yet understood in terms of all of its capabilities. We do not need to know all of the intricacies of the cortical connections to know that the brain reflects the environment in which it finds itself. Let us take the same care of our children's environment as we do for the environment of the astronauts hurdling through outer space. For second chances are not available.

Sometimes change just has to come from the outside, because the system tends to perpetuate its foibles. It cannot see where it has gone wrong, as it sees only those things that corroborate its premises. A charter school would be the perfect vehicle to take a fresh look at the education of our students and to set up a new pedagogy. Put the child in the driver's seat, fill his gas tank with a high octane fuel, give him a road map and basic provisions, and let him feel the exhilaration of self-directed learning to the greatest extent possible.

4. *School Demographics:*

A. The school will be located in Wellesley, or, if not there, in Natick or Newton. No facility has yet been secured. The search for an appropriate facility will begin once the school has been approved.

B. This location was selected because of the need for students to be able to learn at their own rate, to be allowed

more opportunities to work independently, and to move forward in their studies without artificial limits imposed by a rigid curriculum.

C The student population to be served is unique in the sense of having a great number of children whose needs are not being met at the present time.

D The school's anticipated enrollment at the outset is 144 children.

E Grades kindergarten through eight will be served. Sixteen students will be in each grade.

5. *Recruiting and Marketing Plan:*

A. Efforts to publicize the school will be extensive. All opportunities to circularize the founding of the school, its mission and objectives will be utilized.

The following is a partial list of the ways that we would publicize the school:

1. The newspapers from the surrounding towns will be contacted for information regarding opportunities for meetings with the editors to discuss potential publication of articles on the school.

2. Local groups, such as The Committee For The Nineties, that are presently active in evaluating their community's educational needs will be contacted to discuss the possibility of presentations to their members.

3. Through word of mouth a mailing list will be assembled of all parents who might be interested in the school.

4. Brochures will be sent to all potential interested parents.

B. Families who are interested in the school will be invited to attend a seminar at which the mission of the school will be explained and the school's objectives delineated. A preliminary overview of the program will be articulated, and

suggestions made by the participants shall be discussed. There will be a question and answer period at the end. At that meeting, and others that will follow, everyone will be asked to sign their name to indicate that they would like to be kept posted on the developments of the school as it begins to take shape, and whether or not they would like to take an active role in the day-to-day planning and implementation of the program. The community will be a great resource for the school and efforts to utilize this resource will be made from the inception of the school.

6. *Admissions Policy:*

A. The school's admissions process will be comprehensive. It will include, but not be limited to, the following: interviews with the parents, recommendations from the child's caretakers and teachers, samples of the child's work, and observations of the child in a few different situations. The standards that will be the basis of the final determination will not be the traditional ones of test scores and the like, although these may be considered in the overall process. Rather, the decision whether or not to admit the child will be based on the child's overall development and compatibility with the type of program that the school will offer. If the child is already in school and is very happy at the school where she is currently enrolled, that child may not be the right candidate for this school. If the child is experiencing frustration in his current placement, that will be important. If the factors leading to the frustration of the child in his current placement were related to his individual learning style, or the fact that the child was in certain ways developmentally out of synchronization with her classmates, this would be an important factor.

B. The above admissions policies further the mission of the school by taking a holistic approach to the student. The child is a complex human being, and the traditional admissions standards that rely on quantifiable factors will not do justice to the complete person that a child is in the process of becoming. By looking at the factors underlying the student's performance in her current placement, the admissions committee will avoid prejudging a child based on certain types of quantifiable results. A student body diverse in its background would be the ideal for this school, given its overall objectives of facilitating the

development of all children who are ready for the challenge. The most important factor will be the child's approach to learning and the family's commitment to a partnership with the school. Although a student's performance in certain areas may be relevant to a full understanding of the child, her particular achievements, viewed separately from the entire person, will not be determinative of whether or not she is the type of student that will benefit from the school's program.

7. *Profile of the Founding Coalition::*

A. The group that is working together to apply for a charter are as follows:

1. Juliette H. Montague graduated from Boston College Law School in 1982, and has been practicing law for eleven years. She has two children at the elementary school level. She decided to found a school when she recognized that the school system was unable to inspire her children to stretch their minds. Prior to going into private practice, she worked for the Department of Social Services for three years. It was during the course of her work there that she began to appreciate the struggle that many children endure in their early years, and a commitment to helping children realize their potential began to take shape. Approximately four years ago she began to envision creating an alternative school.

2. Catherine O'Brien graduated from Boston College in 1986. She has taught both third and fourth grade, six of those years in public school. She has received her master's in reading education. She is currently pursuing her C.A.G.S. in school administration and certification as a principal. Presently, she is a fourth grade teacher in Natick. Her philosophy of education and the manner in which she teaches allows the child to be the center of the learning process. By having a variety of projects going on in the room, the children have the opportunity for independent, as well as cooperative learning. She has designed and implemented activities, tailored to her students' needs. She is committed to the concept that as the needs of the children change, so must the way in which they are educated.

3. Sigrid Bergenstein is a parent of three young children: a preschooler, one in second grade and another in sixth grade. She has an MA from Stanford in Asian Studies. In the past she has been very involved in her children's education and has served as president of the PTO. She wants the best education for her children.

B. The group came together as a result of their similar concerns and beliefs.

C. Further recruitment of additional founders will be done as soon as the school has received its charter. At least three more founders will be sought to ensure a solid base of support.

8. *Timetable :*

March 15	Have received notice of acceptance
April 15	Have selected additional founders and identified potential classroom buildings
May 15	Have developed a budget and identified potential sources of grant money
June 15	Have developed a plan to secure start-up money to secure the building Have contacted local newspapers and prepared brochure Have held first seminar for interested parents Have developed mailing list of interested parents and list of potential trustees
July 15	Have determined how much start-up money will be available from grants and how much additional money will have to be raised
August 15	Have identified the Board of Trustees
September 15	Have identified the Admissions Committee
October 15	Have sent out application materials to all interested families Have entered into lease negotiations
November 15	Have secured start-up money and secured the building
December 1	Have had the building inspected for deficiencies and cost of repairs

	Have advertised for principal, teachers and staff
	Have met with the various groups that are interested in public education
January 15	Have interviewed prospective teachers and formulated the overview of the academic and nonacademic program
February 15	Have completed parts 2 and 3 of the charter school application and interviewed interested families
March 15	Have evaluated applicants
April 15	Have sent out letters of acceptance to prospective students
May 15	Have assembled a list of the incoming students
June 15	Have completed all work to be done on the building
July 15	Have set up the administrative offices in the building and ordered all equipment and supplies
August 1	Have hired a principal, teachers and support staff
August 15	Have fine-tuned the program
September 1	Are prepared to open

